

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Division of Measurement Standards
8500 Fruitridge Road
Sacramento, CA 95826



April 8, 2003

TO THE INDUSTRY MEMBER ADDRESSED

In December of 2000, a letter was sent to the motor oil industry regarding the labeling of motor oils meeting the obsolete Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE)/American Petroleum Institute (API) category SA. This letter is intended to provide similar notice for all other motor oils labeled as meeting any obsolete SAE/API service classification, (i.e., SB, SC, SD, SE, SF, and SG).

California Business and Professions Code, Division 5, Chapter 14, Section 13482 states the following:

"It is unlawful for any person to sell or distribute engine oil or axle and manual transmission lubricant unless the SAE/API service classification is conspicuously marked on each container. Each container of engine oil with a volume of one gallon or less shall bear a plainly visible statement indicating generally the automobile model years or condition of service for which the engine oil is suitable for gasoline engines as described in SAE J183."

SAE J183, Appendix A, contains specific labeling language that is considered reasonable and prudent for inclusion on labels of motor oil containers as follows:

SA Oils

"CAUTION— THIS OIL IS RATED API SA. IT CONTAINS NO ADDITIVES. IT IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN MOST GASOLINE POWERED AUTOMOTIVE ENGINES BUILT AFTER 1930. USE IN MODERN ENGINES MAY CAUSE UNSATISFACTORY ENGINE PERFORMANCE OR EQUIPMENT HARM."

SB Oils

"CAUTION— THIS OIL IS RATED API SB AND IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN MOST GASOLINE POWERED AUTOMOTIVE ENGINES BUILT AFTER 1963. USE IN MORE MODERN ENGINES MAY CAUSE UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE OR EQUIPMENT HARM."

SC Oils

"CAUTION— THIS OIL IS RATED API SERVICE SC AND IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN MOST GASOLINE POWERED AUTOMOTIVE ENGINES BUILT AFTER 1967. USE IN MORE MODERN ENGINES MAY CAUSE UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE OR EQUIPMENT HARM."

SD Oils

"CAUTION— THIS OIL IS RATED API SERVICE SD. IT IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN MOST GASOLINE POWERED AUTOMOTIVE ENGINES BUILT AFTER 1971. USE IN MODERN ENGINES MAY CAUSE UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE OR EQUIPMENT HARM."

SE Oils

"CAUTION— THIS OIL IS RATED API PERFORMANCE CATEGORY SE. IT IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN MOST GASOLINE POWERED AUTOMOTIVE ENGINES BUILT AFTER 1979."

SF Oils

"CAUTION— THIS OIL IS RATED API SERVICE CATEGORY SF. IT IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN MOST GASOLINE POWERED AUTOMOTIVE ENGINES BUILT AFTER 1988. IT MAY NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION AGAINST THE BUILD-UP OF ENGINE SLUDGE."

SG Oils

"CAUTION— THIS OIL IS RATED API SERVICE CATEGORY SG. IT IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN MOST GASOLINE POWERED AUTOMOTIVE ENGINES BUILT AFTER 1993. IT MAY NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION AGAINST THE BUILD-UP OF ENGINE SLUDGE, OXIDATION, OR WEAR."

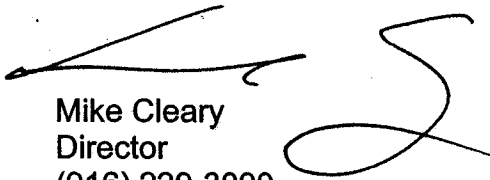
California law requires that the applicable language found in Appendix A of SAE J183 be included on all containers of motor oil with an obsolete API service category intended solely for gasoline automotive engines.

Current enforcement of the law requires that all containers of API SA and API SB motor oil that do not conform with the law, will be removed from sale. All containers of API SA and API SB motor oil taken "OFF SALE" for lacking the appropriate caution statement must be re-labeled to comply with the law before being placed back on sale in California.

Only those statements referenced verbatim in Section 13482 are acceptable under the law. It should be noted that as additional API motor oil service categories become obsolete and SAE J183 is updated to include those newly obsolete categories, packages of those newly obsolete motor oil products must contain the required verbatim cautionary statements.

Any questions regarding these labeling requirements should be directed to Cindy Lyon-Mough, Program Supervisor, at (916) 229-3050.

Sincerely,


Mike Cleary
Director
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